

A HISTORIC OCCASION

Shirley Taylor Frye and
Henry E. Frye

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A Historic Occasion

*Shirley Taylor Frye
and
Henry E. Frye*

*Together with Addresses of Friends
On the Occasion of Their Acceptance of the
North Caroliniana Society Award for 2008*



"THE JUSTICES SUPREME"

[See inside front cover for caption]

NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY IMPRINTS

Number 46

H. G. Jones, *General Editor*, Nos. 1-46

*This edition is limited to
five hundred copies
of which this is number
0500*

Pictured on the front cover, at the reception for Shirley and Henry Frye, are six present or former justices of the North Carolina Supreme Court. Left to right are Associate Justice Patricia Timmons-Goodson, Chief Justice Sarah Parker, former Associate Justice Harry C. Martin, former Chief Justice Henry E. Frye, former Associate Justice Willis P. Whichard, and former Chief Justice James Exum, Jr.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS: Frye family photos courtesy Shirley T. Frye. Banquet color photos by Jerry W. Cotten; black and white by Jan G. Hensley.

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NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY
2009

PART I

Addresses by the Fryes

On May 29, 2008, the North Caroliniana Society, as a part of its thirty-third annual meeting, conferred the North Caroliniana Society Award for 2008 upon Shirley Taylor Frye and her husband, former Chief Justice Henry E. Frye. The venue was the couple's alma mater, The North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro. In the Alumni-Foundation Event Center during the afternoon session, both honorees spoke, and their addresses are reproduced in full.



Pictured above are seven members of the Frye family (from left to right): granddaughter Whitney, daughter-in-law Angela, Shirley, son Harlan, son Henry, Jr., Henry, Sr., and granddaughter Jordan. Granddaughter Endya missed the occasion because she was an intern in UNC Medical School.

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From Fremont to Greensboro and Beyond (make circ)

Shirley Taylor Frye

Friends and family, I need to share with each of you that I am not comfortable standing before you. I have tremendous difficulty talking about myself. However, let me say thanks to the North Caroliniana Society for selecting Henry and me for this great honor. You see, I have never thought of myself as being scholarly. I looked at myself as more of an activist or implementer. I really thought you had made a mistake!

Now that I have this grand distinction, what in the world have I to say? Now, I hasten to tell you that the phrase is not original with me. I am sure that some of you are political watchers; remember that Barbara Jordan began her keynote address to the 1976 Democratic Convention with that phrase. It really hits the core of the matter with me this afternoon.

Growing up in the tobacco fields near a small town called Fremont in eastern North Carolina, in a family of five siblings, where my parents were



GIFT, NORTH CAROLINIANA SOCIETY

tobacco and vegetable farmers—at least that’s what my father did—is my base. I say that’s what my father did, because my mother stayed at home and made sure that he had three meals a day and that we developed a good work ethic. My father had a formal education of about the fourth grade (but he helped me with my algebra), while my mother was a high school graduate. They instilled in their four girls and one son that a good education and good family relations were important. I was the middle child, and birth order did play its role. I have always been independent, open, and never allowing anyone to waste his or her time wondering where I stand on an issue. There, I developed trust with my parents by telling the truth, respecting their decisions, challenging them sometimes, but always striving for excellence.

Many of you may know that I have a very deep interest in volunteerism, its evolving definition, its optimal utilization, and its optimal survival. I have taken my zeal and enthusiasm with me each day of my life. Every day I awake, excited about what I may face. In each of my employment responsibilities, I have found ways to do all that I was able to do in the arena of volunteering!

Tonight I have made the decision to talk about trying to make a difference through my “passion”—volunteering. With that I am reminded of the phrase, “Let the greatest among you serve.” A philosophy I hold dear! The key word is “serve.” I believe the greatest leader is one who serves the people. I have devoted my life in the service of others.

My first adult volunteer responsibility was as a leader of a Girl Scout troop when I was a sophomore in college in 1951. I received a great deal of training through that organization, thus preparing me for my life’s passion. It was a rewarding experience; I was only six years older than my scouts. I was there leading young women toward a greater discipline. At the age of 17, I learned then that leaders must be honest with others in order to establish a line of trust that others may follow. I am here tonight, I think, because I have somehow developed that trust with those associated with the North Caroliniana Society. I am here, too, because I simply could not refuse my friends of long-standing, H. G. Jones and Willis Whichard, if for no other reason than that the story of my life for the past 50 years has been to juggle volunteer responsibilities along with whatever state of confusion my life happens to be, at whatever time. I happen to know also that this may be the story for many of you. The very fact that we are here together tonight suggests to me that we’ve been effective jugglers. I mean also that we have identified our lives with the pressing problems of people within our schools, within our communities, within our state and within our nation. We are here because we care. Many of you recognize the value of the North Caroliniana Society, dedicated to the promotion of increased knowledge and appreciation

of North Carolina's heritage, through scholarly research, writing, and teaching state and local history and literature.

When I was young, a thousand years ago, I was seeking a formula, a plan for winning, and a plan for helping others and a plan toward meeting with success. If I were to meet success, I wanted others to experience the same. I paid close attention to a large number of people, and I read a number of biographies and autobiographies. I once read or someone shared with me on occasions what they thought would cause one to meet with success. This is how I captured it: *Smarts* plus *Education* plus *Hard Work* would bring about *Independence* and *Success*. I thought on that and decided that being independent was probably a good goal for me; it would help me to become successful. My argument, though, was that when it comes to being *Smart*, not everyone could be Phi Beta Kappa—surely I am not! Hence, I altered the formula a bit. I put it this way: *Common Sense* plus *Smarts* plus *Integrity* plus *Character* plus *Education* plus *Courage* plus *Hard Work* would equal *Success* and *Independence*.

I have been told that anthropology, biology, and psychology throw great light on one's ancestry. We are reminded that all of us have a common origin and that despite our differences we are all the same under the skin! But we still don't understand each other, and more often than not we don't take the time or find the time to learn more about ourselves and about others. Tonight I will try to share with you what I am about! I know that you carved out some time to be with us here tonight, and I am so pleased that you thought enough to come, so I will try not to bore you. So may I share with you some of the experiences that have caused me to be successful and gain a bit of independence? Let me get back to the formula: I added *Common Sense*, *Integrity*, *Character*, and *Courage* to the mix.

Let me look at *Common Sense*. I am talking about good sound, practical judgment: those everyday, garden-variety decisions we all have to make. Sometimes when I am about to make a decision, I can hear my mother say, "Shirley, use good common sense." Each of us knows that we cannot meet with success unless we develop effective relations with the people with whom we work, live, play, or sleep. My belief is that no matter how well we know our subject matter or how skilled we are, if we do not have effective relationships with the people it will affect, we might as well not have the skill or know the subject matter. I believe research will back me up that more people lose their jobs for poor relationships than lack of skill. I have always admired a company on whose board I sat that had as its philosophy, "We hire for behavior and train for skill."

Hard Work: I have always worked hard; it made up for a lot of smarts. It was unprepared genius. A lot depends on energy level. (You see, every day I consume a thousand milligrams of Vitamin C energy booster.) As a

youngster I developed that hard work ethic, following my daddy around at most of the things he did, or those in which he would allow his girls to participate. I learned that we have to work hard and work smart. I needed to see some results.

Then there is *Attitude*. Early on in my career, I was often in meetings where the majority of the participants were of the opposite gender. I discovered a remarkable omen! Sometimes they seemingly could not hear me. I would make a suggestion; conversation would continue without comment on my suggestion. Then maybe five or ten minutes later someone else of a different gender would come up with the same idea and it would be promptly accepted as if it were a new suggestion. I soon learned something about attitude, about being heard, and about preparation. I learned how to be heard and how to articulate. I needed to become assertive and sufficiently aggressive and above all prepared.

My parents consistently told us that it was important to have a sound moral principle—that we must always be honest and sincere. I later found that the word that encompassed it all was *Integrity*. I know how important it really is. Some people whom I respected and in whom I had confidence have allowed greed to overtake their integrity. Some of them are not in leadership roles today. And if they are still in their positions, as my mother often said, “It will catch up with them sooner or later.”

Then there is *Character*. It has many different names and faces—all of them important. I have found all of the highest and noblest aspects of character in the life of my Supreme Being. I have selected Him as my role model for character because His life mirrored what He believed. I recognize that I cannot espouse noble values, act in an ignoble way, and then count myself as having noble character. I have chosen to be the best that I can be—to pursue the highest values, and then live my life according to those values. I am reminded of the late banker J.P. Morgan. He was asked what he considered the best bank collateral. He answered, “character.” Good character, I have found, is worth more than a fortune in anyone’s bank account, and it is definitely easier to acquire than a million dollars. I have tried to live by the Golden Rule: Treat others as I would like to be treated.

Then there is *Education*. I don’t need to say anything about that because your presence on this campus today speaks for itself; simply, I am a graduate of this great institution. This university gave me a good foundation to do what I am doing today and what I have done.

I also added *Courage*. I had to exercise the courage to work with the challenges that came before me. I had to take risks. I pursued activities and projects that took me out of my comfort zone. I learned quickly that one cannot grow unless we remove ourselves from that comfort zone. I needed

the courage to move; I learned that the courage to fulfill a vision comes from passion, not position.

As I ventured through the path that I have taken, I had to have some semblance of a *Plan*. I observed that some people, some organizations, some companies have five-year plans, some had more or less. Well, I had some plans, some were five-year plans, but most of them were short-term plans. While in college, I wanted to leave the farm, become a great teacher, and make lots of money. You may know what I did. I became that teacher, didn't make a lot of money, but I surely did enjoy it. The important thing was that I loved what I was doing, and I found that money was not the most important thing; it did help in making me happy, but it surely is not the primary factor.

My next plan included marriage, a family, and life in some large city outside North Carolina. I found myself in Greensboro at a college I had not planned to attend. I did find great happiness in this university; this is where I met the man of my dreams—a person who espoused the same values I had, a person that I knew much sooner than he did that I wanted to spend my life with him. He finally realized that he was out there “looking for a rose, while overlooking an orchid”!

After marriage, as I suggested earlier, I found myself in Greensboro, away from my family, and with new challenges. I then made a plan focusing on putting my family in a win-win situation. I am pleased to say that this marriage will have survived 52 years in August. With our sons entering school, I began doing more volunteer work and furthering my education. My task, as I chose to see it, was to prepare myself for all of my roles—that as wife, mother, my career, and to be a leader. A degree of competence in planning and decision making for those functions that would help society tick structurally, financially, politically, and economically would be the bedrock of my foray into leadership and development.

As suggested to you earlier, I made plans, but I made several adjustments along the way. Today, I spend most of my time listening to people asking the same questions I was asking. What must I do to meet with success, who should be my role model? All of us, you and me, are seizing new roles, defining a new value system for our lives. We are tackling issues of social equity, justice, and peace—taking them all in stride. Uppermost to me is always behaving in a way that I do not have to make apologies for my behavior. I deeply believe that none of us can say that we choose not to be a mentor, we do not have that luxury. There are folk out there who choose each one in here as their model. There are many young people who are putting their lives together into a whole new entity, using us as a model. Many women, I have found, are managing the demands of work, marriage, homemaking, children, and the community; some men are struggling with the

same issues. I believe that it is important to share with that group of people my *Success* at handling those issues.

I do recognize that there are those who judge success differently than I do. So what direction did I take? I chose the plan that made me happy and contented. I am blessed to have had a great career, a great husband, two wonderful sons—one who sees himself as my ‘father,’ giving me advice, which is usually good—that is Harlan. And one who chose to share one of the most beautiful persons that one could imagine as a daughter-in-law—that’s Henry, Jr. If I were in a culture to have selected a mate for him, I would have chosen Angela. Then, if that were not enough, Henry, Jr. and Angela gave us three of the most beautiful, talented, trustworthy girls the world has ever encountered: Whitney, a Carolina graduate, who will be enrolling in law school in the fall; Jordan, a rising senior at UNC-G, who will become the greatest first grade teacher ever; and Endya, a rising junior at NCA&T with a biology major, who couldn’t be here tonight because she is at Carolina in a pre-med summer program beginning her journey as a pediatrician.

I have tried hard to act intelligently and effectively. I had a plan. There is a proverb that says “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” I’ve tried to analyze the problems and resources, and I have been willing to take calculated risks and break new ground. I have always challenged myself. I always remind myself that I surely can’t expect any person to listen to my advice and ignore my example. There is an old adage that I have tried to live with; it is “to never go through life with a catcher’s mitt on both hands. I always need to be able to throw something back.”

Often I have a session with myself. I need that time to get in touch with me, determine my achievements and goals through a process of self-analysis. Where am I now? Where am I going? I believe all of us should do the same. Why? Now, I am sure all of us have heard some version of what I am about to say! When we die, there is usually a tombstone placed on our grave. On that stone, there will be a birth date, a dash, and a death date. When we were born, we had no opportunity to express a choice of gender, for we were simply born male or female. We had no input as to our nationality, for certainly we were born in a predetermined manner, black, white, mixed, native American, or whatever. We simply had no input. Now at death, we don’t have the opportunity for a preference to sit down at the table of deliberation and contemplate the issues of whether or not we have time to die. We simply check out. So we may ask what is my reason for being here, then? If I don’t have any input at the beginning and nothing to say about the ending, what should I do? Remember, there is a birth date, a dash, and a death date. The dash represents our life; it represents the time when we can help or hinder, the time we can encourage and not oppose, the time that we can volunteer

with the few and help the many. The dash represents the time when we can recognize perhaps that person who could only afford food stamps, but had them snatched out from beneath them and yet managed to make two dollars do the work of ten dollars. That dash is the time we should recognize the array of concerns, and decide that people cannot be expected to improve their lives if they are bound to poverty and joblessness, or bound to deprivation and dependency, or children born to illiteracy. That dash is the time when we must develop humane and orderly sophisticated solutions to our problem solving, a time when we can develop solutions that will provide a clear, profound and comprehensive strategy to our many problems. These challenges are urgent, the appeals are legitimate, and we are all tied to this moving, pulsing process of existence. It is of tremendous and continuous significance that we all participate as a volunteer in some capacity; and remember, as did the poet, "I shall not pass this way again"; any good thing, therefore, that I can do, let me do it right now. Let me not defer it nor neglect it, for "I shall not pass this way again!" That's my commitment!

From Ellerbe to Chief Justice and Beyond

Henry E. Frye

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back, the burden of the world.
Who made him dead to rapture and despair?

....

Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave
To have dominion over sea and land;

....

Cries protest to the Judges of the world,
A protest that is also prophecy.



O masters, lords, and rulers in all lands
Is this the handiwork you give to God?
This monstrous thing. . . .

. . . .
O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,
How will the future reckon with this Man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shall shake all shores?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings—
With those who shaped him to the thing he is—
When this dumb Terror shall rise to judge the world,
After the silence of the centuries?

I suppose you are wondering—what does this have to do with Henry Frye? Well, I'll tell you. Some 60 years ago, while I was a student in high school and a member of the New Farmers of America, I came to Greensboro to participate in a public speaking contest. It was held, as I recall, in the Richard B. Harrison Auditorium on the campus of what was then A&T College. I had won the contest on the local level—and now I was in the “big time.”

I was nervous and, frankly, the acoustics in Harrison Auditorium did not help the situation one bit. I had a fellow student, who dressed in a pair of overalls and an old hat, who stood beside me and leaned over a stick as I pointed toward him and recited Edwin Markham's poem, “The Man with a Hoe.” Edwin Markham had written the poem after being impressed with Miller's world-famous painting of a brutalized toiler.

This evening, I return to N.C. A&T State University, my alma mater, with pride—and with thanks. With pride, because it is a bigger and better institution today—and with thanks because it gave me an education that allowed me to compete in the research lab at Felton Chemical Company in Brooklyn, New York; in the officers training program in San Antonio, Texas; in munitions school at Lowry AFB in Denver, Colorado; and later in law school at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. It was here at A&T that I developed leadership skills while serving as an officer in several campus organizations—and attended the State Student Legislative Assembly in Raleigh. I not only drafted and presented a bill to the student legislature, but I even presided for a while as Speaker Pro Tem of the House of Representatives at the Student Legislature in Raleigh. As best I can recall, a very controversial bill was introduced by the N.C. State delegation—opposed by the Carolina delegation—and then things got almost out of hand as various amendments were offered, then amendments to the amendment, various motions—then, it seemed that everybody wanted to

speak on the bill, or ask a question—and delegates were jumping up from every corner, yelling, “Mr. Speaker,” “Mr. Speaker,” and others began jumping up, and without being recognized, claiming “point of order,” or he or she is “out of order”—so I just banged the gavel and declared, “everybody’s out of order but me!”

That sort of “broke up” the house, with some laughter, but things quieted down and we were able to restore order. (Little did I know that one day I would come back as a member of the real North Carolina Legislature.)

Let me pause to say thanks to Shirley for her love and encouragement through the years; we are less than three months away from our 52nd wedding anniversary!

We have two children, and we are proud of both of them

Our younger son Harlan is married to basketball and golf. His passion is coaching basketball at any level—he has taken several teams to Florida during the summer—and he tries to teach the players not only the skills of the game but also the skills of life, and I am proud of him for that. His “paying” job is as Human Resources Director for the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. And as for golf—well—he usually beats his dad although his dad is playing from the senior tees!

Henry, Jr., is a Superior Court judge. He is also one of several “pastors” in his church—but he also is a budding artist. He loves to draw and sketch and design shirts and neckties, including bow ties. His wife, Angela, manages a medical practice and does a lot of work in the church. They are very different—she likes to go to bed early and get up early—he likes to stay up late and sleep late—but they have managed to blend well as a couple—and they’ve done a great job of rearing our three grandchildren, Whitney, Jordan, and Endya. Whitney graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill and has been working this year at Bank of America. Jordan has completed her third year at UNC-Greensboro, an education major. She wants to be a school teacher, and she will be a good one. And Endya is a sophomore here at A and T, a biology major like her grandfather. Unlike her grandfather, she wants to be a medical doctor—a pediatrician. She is not here this evening because she is in Chapel Hill as an intern at the UNC Medical School.

But I’ve gotten far ahead of myself. Let me tell you about my growing up in the Sandhills of North Carolina on the outskirts of the little town of Ellerbe. My parents, Pearl and Walter Frye, had 12 children—six boys and six girls. I was number eight. My parents are now deceased, and today I have one brother and three sisters. I’m happy to have my younger brother Elbert and his family along with my sister Ola with us for this occasion.

We grew up on a farm—learned to get up early regardless of what time we went to bed. Tobacco was the cash crop, and a lot of the work growing and harvesting tobacco had to be done early in the morning—or so we were told. My dad said that our hours of work were “from can’t to can’t” meaning you can’t see in the morning when you start and you don’t stop at night as long as you can see how to get the work done. We farmed our own property and rented property from others.

There were two schools in Ellerbe: Ellerbe High and Ellerbe Colored High. You may guess which one we attended. Those were the days of “separate but (un)equal.” The new busses, the new books, the new furniture went to Ellerbe High and the used busses, books, and furniture went to Ellerbe Colored. Blacks and whites worked together in the fields and tobacco barns—but otherwise generally led separate lives. When the local drugstore had a counter where one could sit and eat, it was for whites only. And, of course, the separate races had their separate churches.

I do recall a special service rendered by some of the white churches, and that was a Bible School during early summer—held at the Black School. As an elementary school student, I attended—and I have very warm feelings about the teachers—who were very genuine and committed. And they helped me as I tried to forge a *philosophy of life*.

I read a lot: comic books to Robin Hood—and King Arthur and his Knights. I read biographies of great people and learned and recited a lot of poetry, especially that of Langston Hughes, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and James Weldon Johnson.

As I look out at the audience this afternoon, I see many of you to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. You have been advisors to me as I attempted to develop a law practice, start a bank, get elected to the House and the Senate, and yes, to the North Carolina Supreme Court. Some have sent business my way, contributed to my election campaigns, invested your money in Greensboro National Bank, defended me against adverse criticism, and helped me and my family in ways that I didn’t even know about. I thank you. I can’t pay you back, but I can help somebody else. And that is my challenge.

When I graduated from A&T in 1953 and received my commission as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force Reserve, I was ready to begin my active duty as an Air Force officer, but I waited and waited and the days and weeks passed—slowly—and I did not receive the call to report for duty, and I soon began to realize that my goal of being an active Air Force officer had to be postponed and I had better find a job. It wasn’t easy! I looked around Ellerbe, then Greensboro, and then in New York.

It seemed that every good position for which I applied required someone with two years’ experience. I had no experience, so I didn’t get any of those

positions. Since I knew that I would receive my call to active duty fairly soon, I began applying for unskilled jobs and was told that I was “over qualified.” With the help of another Aggie, I finally found an ordinary job at Armor & Company, where the work was hard, the qualifications few, but the pay was good. Some four months later, I received my call to active duty, and I reported to Lackland AFB as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, thus achieving one of my goals. But, in the meantime, I had learned some valuable lessons that would help me throughout life. I had learned how to deal with the alligators in my life.

Since most of our lives are spent living in the meantime, it behooves us to find ways to adjust to this phenomenon. This adjustment can be negative or positive, depending largely upon your philosophy of life. What is your vision—your overall attitude toward life? Do you believe that “life is but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more”? Do you believe that life “is full of sound and fury,” and “signifying nothing”? Or was William Wordsworth Longfellow correct when he wrote:

Life is real! Life is earnest! And the grave is not its goal; Dust thou art,
to dust returneth, was not spoken of the soul. Not enjoyment, and
not sorrow, is our destined end or way; But to act, that each tomorrow
find us farther than today.

I’m with Longfellow, that we act “that each tomorrow find us farther than today.” All of us make mistakes. But we should not make the same mistake over and over again. At some point we must learn from our mistakes, and then act on what we have learned. Each of us should be smarter and better and more knowledgeable than we were a year ago.

There are those who say that happiness should be one’s purpose in life. But I like the statement on my roller deck’s “thought for the day,” as follows:

The purpose of life is not to be happy, but to matter, to be productive,
to be useful; to have it make some difference that you lived.

I hasten to add that those who are productive, those who are useful, those who matter, those who make a positive difference in the lives of others are often the happiest people on earth. But happiness is not their goal, not their purpose; happiness is a by-product that comes from knowing that you have succeeded in doing something good; that you have been productive, that you have been useful, that what you have done matters.

I like that on a group level and on an individual basis. Does it matter that there are teachers and administrators who care about the students, who want to see them succeed, and who are willing to go out of their way, if necessary, to

help a student? I think it does matter.

Does it matter that there are people in the community who are willing to give their time, their influence, and their money to help make our schools all that they can be? I think it does.

And now to you and to me. Does it matter that some of you, like me, were not born rich, but you still have great hopes for the future? That you work hard developing the skills that will allow you to fulfill your dreams and the dreams of your children and grandchildren? Does it matter if we fail? I think it does.

North Carolina has been good to me. Oh, there have been bumps along the way, but I value the challenges as well as the opportunities that I've had, the friendships that I have developed, the people who have been my supporters, my advisors, even my critics. And throughout my life, I've tried to remember the words of my elementary and high school principal, Mr. S. B. T. Easterling, who warned me that "quitters never win, and winners never quit." When I feel like quitting—thinking that there is no way—I can hear my mother saying, "Where there's a will, there's a way." And so, I keep on trying, to find a way—to make things better.

A part of my philosophy of life is expressed in two verses of William Wadsworth Longfellow's "Psalm of Life":

Life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal
Dust thou art, to dust returneth, was not spoken of the soul.
Not enjoyment and not sorrow is our destined end or way,
But to act that each tomorrow find us farther than today.

We have many problems in North Carolina. We have made a lot of progress, but we have a long way to go! Let us all work together in order that each tomorrow will find us farther than today.

As I bring these remarks to a close, let me join Shirley in thanking the North Caroliniana Society for honoring us on this occasion, and for all of the good things that you do, especially awarding scholarships to so many scholars through the years.

Many of you—like me—are getting "up in age"—and if you have a tendency to watch television all day—especially the "soaps"—I have this warning for you: Don't go off to search for tomorrow, or you might fall off the edge of night, and end up in another world—if it's Santa Barbara—and you find all your children—tell them to take you to general hospital where the bold and the beautiful nurses will take you to the young and restless doctors, who will tell you that you have but one life to live, but with the aid of a guiding light, you will survive as the world turns.

PART II

Tributes to the Fries

At the banquet in the evening, tributes were paid to the Fries by individuals chosen by them. Martin H. Brinkley, a Raleigh attorney who serves as treasurer of the Society, presided, and his remarks and introductions precede the texts of the speakers. Following the tributes, President Willis P. Whichard presented the award, which was graciously accepted by the remarkable couple. A small selection of photos give an indication of the respect with which Shirley and Henry Frye are held by both citizens of Greensboro and Guilford County, but also by the entire state of North Carolina.



Introductory Remarks

Martin H. Brinkley

Before going forward with our program, Dr. Jones wanted something said about the North Caroliniana Society. So I will say two sentences: Our passion is North Carolina and our motto is “Substance, not Show.” That means that we *do* rather than talk about doing, and we seek *service* rather than publicity. For example, we did not seek publicity for this event, because we wanted it to be held in the presence of Shirley and Henry’s family and close friends.

Not all of you heard the Fries’ fascinating reflections this afternoon, but don’t bother to ask them for copies, because they, along with the full proceedings of this meeting, will be published later this year in our *North Caroliniana Society Imprints* series, a copy of which will go to you in the mail. For that reason, in choosing our speakers, we try to think of two or three persons who have unique perspectives on the recipients, who can put into the public record (for that is what the *Imprints* will do) some aspects of their lives that may otherwise go unrecorded. For Shirley and Henry Frye, whose lives have touched so many, that is indeed a challenge, but we are up to it.

Our first speaker, a dear friend of the Fries and mine, and the man who taught this transactional lawyer whatever little he knows about trial advocacy, is Charles Becton. A great lawyer, author, and lecturer, Judge Becton practices law in Raleigh with Becton, Slifkin & Bell. He has served since 1976 as the John Scott Cansler Lecturer at the University of North Carolina School of Law and since 1980 as the Senior Lecturer in Law at the Duke University School of Law, where he received his J.D. degree in 1969. Judge Becton earned his bachelor’s degree from Howard University in 1966 and received an LL.M. degree from the University of Virginia in 1986. He served on the North Carolina Court of Appeals from 1981 to 1990 and was named North Carolina Appellate Judge of the Year in 1985. He is the recipient of the Justice William J. Brennan Jr. Trial Advocacy Award and the Roscoe Pound Foundation’s Richard S. Jacobson Award. The North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers’ Trial Advocacy Award is named for him. Judge Becton is a past president of the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers and of the North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers. In a little more than three weeks, he will become the first African-American man to serve as president of the 15,000 member North Carolina Bar Association.

A man of wisdom and Lincolnesque eloquence—and a dear friend of Henry Frye—Charles Becton.

[Judge Becton's address begins on page 19.]

A native of Greene County, Dr. Velma Speight-Buford has been a professional educator for more than 45 years. A 1953 North Carolina A&T graduate and the holder of master's and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Maryland at College Park, Dr. Speight-Buford began her career as a high school teacher and rose to become Assistant State Superintendent of the Maryland State Department of Education. She served as chair of the Department of Education at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and taught at the Johns Hopkins University, Loyola College, and the University of Maryland at College Park before returning to North Carolina to chair the Department of Counseling and Adult Education at East Carolina University. In 1991, she was a Fulbright Scholar in Ghana and Senegal. In 1993, Dr. Speight-Buford returned to her alma mater as Director of Alumni Affairs and served until her retirement in 1997. During her retirement, Dr. Speight-Buford has continued to serve this university as chair of its Board of Trustees and chair of the 2006 Chancellor Search Committee. North Carolina A&T presented her with an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree in 2006, and the North Carolina A&T University Foundation, Inc., recently named the main lobby of the new Alumni-Foundation Event Center—in which we meet tonight—in her honor. She continues to serve on the boards of numerous nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving the lives of people in Greensboro and Guilford County. A dear friend of Shirley Frye, Dr. Velma Speight-Buford.

[Dr. Speight-Buford's address begins on page 27.]

No one but the Fries' children has had a greater opportunity to get to know the *real* Shirley and Henry Frye than their oldest granddaughter, Whitney, who is already following their example in the public life of our state. Whitney received her bachelor's degree in 2007 from the University at Chapel Hill, where she majored in communications and was a cheerleader. She is currently working at Bank of America and will enroll at North Carolina Central University School of Law this fall. A close relation, who will remain unnamed but who is the currently serving Frye family member in our state judiciary, informed me tonight that she is "savvy." For a unique view of the extraordinary couple we honor tonight, Whitney Frye.

[Ms. Frye's address begins on page 33.]

Ode to Henry E. Frye *A Prosaic and Poetic Tribute*

Charles L. Becton

This brilliant assemblage doth astound.
As I look around and look around,

I see philologists who traverse the grammatical
Doctors who fathom the epidemiological
Educators who comprehend the pedagogical
Lawyers who discern or divine the problematical.

“Yet do we marvel” at our honoree tonight.
Graced by genial guidance grew he to great height
And on inhumanity’s dark side sought he to shed light.

Oh, what an assemblage have we.
People steeped well in history.



We are the ones schooled in every science
 Who treasure research and self-reliance
 Who toil with apt, resolute appliance
 We who challenge with learned defiance.

“Yet do we marvel” at this giant of a man.
 Undeterred to literacy test laws’s demand,
 He authored legislation that law to disband.

In the North Carolinians assembled here
 Honoring contributions all hold dear
 I see boundless beneficence and bountiful benevolence
 I see imposing intelligence and oracled omnipotence
 I see awed affluence and envied prominence
 I see ethereal eloquence and effulgent grandiloquence.

And still we marvel! We who are MD’d, JD’d, and Ph.D’d; we who have written articles refereed; and we whom others fancy as pedigreed marvel when we think of Henry E. Frye. And tonight we pay tribute to him in prose and in poetry.

I’m not going to talk about his local, state, or national honors. His trophies, plaques, and awards would fill that wall [pointing]. What’s on the walls of his study is not nearly as important as what’s in the study of his mind and what’s on the walls of his soul. You see, I’m not here to talk about hardware; I’m here to talk about heart-wear—what Henry Frye wears on his heart. I’m talking about the fiber of the man, the fabric of the man. I’m not even going to talk about this marvelous award, because this hardware, as symbolic as it is for our love and appreciation of Henry Frye, pales in comparison to the honor Henry Frye pays to the North Caroliniana Society by his daily deeds—his “extraordinary contributions to North Carolina’s literary, historical, and cultural heritage.”

I’m not going to talk about all the “firsts” newspapers feel they need to tell you about—the first in his family to do this or that; the first black man in modern times to be an Assistant U.S. Attorney; the first black man of modern times to be elected to the North Carolina General Assembly; the first black man to be appointed to the North Carolina Supreme Court. When Henry Frye got where he got is not nearly as important as what he did when he got there. The moment of his milestones is not nearly as monumental as the momentous marks he made substantively or the mending mind-set changes he effected.

We are happy that Henry Frye prepared himself to open many theretofore closed doors, but we are blessed that once he got in the house he took over. Henry Frye didn’t just go along for the ride. He didn’t just join the parade

or jump on the bandwagon. He refused to sit on the float as a token. He became the drum major in every endeavor. In the college classroom and in Kappa Alpha Psi's frat room; in the Air Force and in civil rights discourse; in service at Providence Baptist Church and in scholarly research; in the courthouse; in the state house; in banking arenas; in the world of business subpoenas; in grass-roots community activities and in well-known public and private charities; and in literary, historical pursuits and in cultural heritage roots.

So, who is the man we honor tonight?

You can read his biographical sketch in your downtime. Let me now summarize his CV in rhyme, before I take you back to real time.

He has earned degrees
From NC A&T and UNC
And from 8 others
A bestowed honorary Ph.D.
His armed force service,
As munitions officer overseas,
Proceeded JAG Corps
Duties assigned to Air Force reserves.
US Attorney
Assistant for two years showed skills untapped.
Private law practice,
24 years and counting, overlapped
Bank presidency.
Election to the state house, then senate;
Appointed by Hunt
To N.C. Supreme Court, where his tenet—
Fairness in all trials—
Signaled calls for Chief Justice appointment;
There ably serving
Till of-counseling with Brooks, Pierce he went.

Now let's go back in time.

He was one of 12 siblings, raised by loving parents in Ellerbe. He was born at the end of the Great Depression, so you know Langston Hughes was talking about Henry Frye when he said:

Life for [him was] no crystal stair
[It] had tacks in it
And splinters,
And boards torn up
And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But he kept a climbin' and reachin' landin's.

Maya Angelou would have said it differently:

...

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise.
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise.
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise.

And do we marvel!

I've quoted poets, but Henry Frye is the impromptu Poet Laureate of this state. He writes rhymes on napkins, paper plates, and paper cups. His exquisite poetry inspires and delights us.

He's a quick-witted man whose wonderful sense of humor amuses us—a warm, friendly and caring man who gets along well with everyone he meets. When he comes into a room, his presence enriches us. And his work and camaraderie ennoble us all.

"Admirably schooled in every grace," Henry Frye is a man of eloquent, refined taste. He's a Renaissance man. He masters every subject so that he is imbued, not just infused; "emersent," not just conversant. He is a man for all seasons.

You see, given his achievements, his charm, his grace, he could have simply stood proud in North Carolina's rich forest of venerable, dignified and exquisite timber. But Henry Frye chose not to stand still merely to be admired, but rather he chose to leave the orchard of long leaf pine and imposing oaks—to become a role model—to plant seeds that grew into majestic and audacious sequoias.

And yet do we marvel, because he never lost the "common touch." He greets all not with an obligatory "hello" but with genuine warmth and sincerity. It's in his handshake; it's in his smile; it's in his eyes. Have you ever met anybody

who didn't like Henry Frye? He's the same whether he meets you in the Governor's Mansion, in the presence of dignitaries in South Africa, on a golf course in Alaska at midnight, or at Subway while he's eating a tuna salad sandwich.

And who is this faithful friend?

His word is his bond, and his fraternal bond with his friends is sacred and inviolate. Fueled by faithful flames of fidelity, Frye fraternally epitomizes the loyalty and devotion that bind people of like qualities into a sacred union.

And do we marvel!

And who is this family man?

We marvel that he is gentle enough to love unconditionally and strong enough to share his love for his family publicly. Henry Frye is the consummate family man. He loves Shirley, his two sons, and three grandchildren willingly and givingly, cheerfully, endearingly, and reverently.

We marvel at this community advocate.

He is the consummate public servant. He is a gadfly to those who resist progressive change in the community. And when Greensboro needed him most—when there were cannons to the left of him and cannons to the right of him and critics everywhere—he served Greensboro ably and well as the most assertive, committed, effective public servant. Tennyson could have been talking about Henry Frye when he said:

Storm'd at with shot and shell
 Boldly [Frye] rode and well
 Into the jaws of death
 Into the mouth of Hell
 Rode [Frye] the crisis to quell.

And who is this jurist?

Henry Frye is one of the most recognized Supreme Court Justices this state has ever had. One of his opinions, defining the circumstances in which law enforcement agencies can compel banks to disclose their customers' records, led directly to the enactment of the North Carolina right to financial privacy act. Another opinion, *Meiselman v. Meiselman*, regarding governance of closely held businesses, is one of the most frequently cited judicial opinions nationally. I'm thoroughly familiar with that seminal opinion since Justice Frye's Supreme Court opinion affirmed the Court of Appeals' opinion in *Meiselman* which I authored in 1982.

And if I were to try to capture this jurist in verse, I'd simply say:

After years of service marvelously
 Writing strong opinions copiously
 We dub the Supreme Court analogously

The Henry Frye Institute.

For once appointed, we all soon learn
Henry Frye left no stone unturned.
And thus he appropriately earned
His most excellent repute.

And “we thank whatever gods may be for [his] unconquerable soul.”

I close this Ode to Justice Henry Ell Frye with this poem about his loves—A&T, Kappa Alpha Psi, law, public service, and family.

Quintessential Fidelity

Jewel’d true blue and gold yon grateful Aggie
Uneclipsed, proud—beaming with confidence—
Summa Cum Laude grad of A&T.
’Twas there he crossed the burning sands and, thence
Infused with manliness-fidelity,
Chose he his path of service to commence
Erstwhile, when Kappa and Aggie pledged he.

Halo’d by the gods of equality,
Endowed with uncommonly common sense
Neither an appellant nor appellee
Recoiled, knowing justice he would dispense
Yore, when a Supreme Court Justice was he.

Endeared three: Alma Mater, Phi Nupie,
Law. Staunch love for a fourth he now evince
Love’s “tridellity,” now “quadelity.”
Framed and molded to treat all equally.
Refined “for life’s ungarlanded expense”
Yeomanly toils this one-man charity
Enthroned public service his recompense.

Staid loyalty to four, yet family
Reigns—quintessentially—the fifth essence.

Conclusion

It was altogether fitting that I quoted excerpts from Maya Angelou’s poem “Still I Rise”; that I used Langston Hughes’ lines to describe how Henry

Frye “kept a climbin’ and reachin’ landin’s”; and that, in my opening poem I mentioned how “graced by genial guidance grew [Henry] to great height.” It was fitting because 55 years ago Henry Frye reached the Summa Cum Laude height when he graduated from A&T. And 55 years ago to this day—on May 29, 1953—Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norkay climbed higher than any human being had ever climbed. They reached the top of Mount Everest that day. But Henry Frye makes Mount Everest-type climbs all the time.

But what would you expect from a noble and bold Kappa, since achievement is his goal?

But what would you expect from a man who publicly states “the purpose of life is to be productive, useful, helpful”?

I tell you, you would not expect anything less from a man who, with Aggie pride, sings

Dear A&T, Dear A&T, a monument indeed

...

Dear A&T, Dear A&T, the signet thou shall be.

And I tell you one additional thing. It is also fitting that today—on the birthday of two of America’s most beloved—Patrick Henry and John F. Kennedy—we pay tribute to Henry E. Frye. He is one of this state’s most beloved.

I am deeply honored that I was asked to pay tribute to Henry E. Frye, a dear friend, a fraternity brother, and a role model for all.

[Quotations not identified in the text are: “Yet do we marvel” from Countee Cullen’s “Yet Do We Marvel”; “Admirably schooled in every grace” from Edwin A. Robinson’s “Richard Cary”; and “we thank whatever gods may be for [his] unconquerable soul” from William Henly, “Invictus.”]

The Shirley Frye I Know

Velma Speight-Buford

Edith Shirley Taylor Frye, from Fremont, North Carolina, the Daffodil City, where the image of the late Ed Lenzie and Mattie Coley Taylor remains with her. While they didn't know Dr. Benjamin E. Mayes, they instilled in her his words: "it is not your environment, it is you—the quality of your minds, the integrity of your souls and the determination of your wills—that will decide your future and shape your lives."

I am extremely honored to be here this evening to celebrate this honor for Henry and Shirley—but particularly Shirley, who as the quote suggested did not allow her environment to shape her destiny. And what a destiny she has shaped!

In thinking about what I would say this evening, many thoughts came to mind.

I could tell you about her success as an educator, particularly her teaching, one who recognized that teachers affect eternity, and they can never tell where their influence stops. One of her second grade students, who later became a professor at NCA&T State University, would say he had wonderful



memories of this woman who lifted his vision from poverty of the common place, who touched his life with nurturing and challenges, set his curiosity on fire, and helped launch him on a life of learning.

I could tell you about the many results of her community involvement but that would be the only area I could cover in the time allotted. Her involvement has been felt throughout this city and county.

I could tell you about her numerous board memberships—all the boards she has been on and is still on, how many she chairs, and the positive results of her involvement—but that too is a topic of its own. I will tell you she has served on so many boards that it takes a notebook to list them all!

I could tell you about her work at WFMY where she won an Emmy, but more important, what a charmer she is. She charmed me into becoming a volunteer—giving free time while she was making mega-bucks, and you know her salary increased after she won the Emmy.

I could tell you about her many honors—a devoted wife, a great mother and grandmother, the recipient of the NCCCJ Brotherhood Award, and the Order of the Long Leaf Pine—but if I talked about them, she would kill me after this affair.

I could tell you that this determined, optimistic, confident, dynamic Shirley that you know today was once, in college, a “fringer,” one who tried to get into our group so she could meet Henry. Maybe she knew something we didn’t know. In her crystal ball she must have known instinctively that he would become the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina, for we had labeled him “Henry The Lame One.” I guess Fuller was right when he said there is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it’s going to be a butterfly!

I could tell you how Shirley made Henry a successful banker, how she got him elected to the state legislature and the supreme court, but then I would have to tell you if you want to get her dander up, introduce her as “This is Justice Frye’s wife.” You must introduce her as “This is Shirley Taylor Frye, whose husband is Henry Frye.” Then you might add, “Do you know Henry Frye?”

I could tell you about her title, “The Person Who Makes Things Happen,” and I could give you many examples when she did just that, but I would have to tell you about an important event she hasn’t made happen—getting Harlan married! Since he is my adopted godson, I bought my dress for his wedding because I thought Shirley had it all planned—only to find out from Harlan that I didn’t need the dress. He informed me that I needed to take the dress to the Smithsonian, because I wouldn’t be needing it. I guess I’ll just get me a basketball jogging suit.

I could tell you about her leadership ability and the many

organizations that she has led—church and social groups, institutes, foundations, and corporations—but that too would take all evening. So suffice it to say, she is asked to provide leadership because she is an authentic leader, a servant leader, and the best of the best.

I could tell you about our relationship, how some people say we are so much alike. They even confuse us, and when they ask me if I'm Mrs. Frye, I smile and say "No" and consider it a compliment; but when they ask Shirley if she is Velma, she quickly responds, "No! Do you know Velma? She's not a diplomat." Shirley has been working on me to become one; it just hasn't rubbed off yet. Even though I'm not a diplomat, she is my "go to person" for the right word, the right person, and the right occasion.

Shirley's accomplishments and awards are enough to make her a candidate for this honor. But I believe and feel what is more important is what came to my mind when first asked to do this: *Everyday Greatness: Inspiration for a Meaningful Life*, a compilation of stories from *Reader's Digest*, with insights by David K. Hatch and commentary by Steven R. Covey. The authors talk about how the world reacts when it witnesses a heroic feat or discovers a person with rare talent, but they and I believe that there are people with another kind of greatness that tend to be more quiet in nature—and many times escape the headlines. That kind of greatness to me is far more deserving and is far more respected and should have the highest honor. It is called "everyday greatness," and I believe this is what sets Shirley apart from others.

You see, "everyday greatness" has to do with character and contributions, not notoriety, wealth, fame, prestige, or position. It says more about who a person *is* than what a person *has*; more about small and simple deeds than about grandiose accomplishments—people who, despite all of the naysayers, all of the negativity, keep doing positive things for the betterment of the community and the world.

Covey states that the root of "everyday greatness" lies in three everyday choices: the choice to act, the choice of purpose, and the choice of principles.

Shirley makes a choice every day to act upon life rather than being acted upon. She takes proactive responsibility for determining her actions and destinations. If you explore Shirley's life and the choices she has made, you will see that she has gotten the most out of life and has given the most and made the choice to act. But she not only makes the choice to act; she thinks about pursuing worthwhile purposes that fill her life with meaning, so her contributions are ones that make a real difference in the lives of others.

An illustration from *Reader's Digest* demonstrates Shirley's principles. Let me share it with you.

One foggy night at sea, the captain of a ship saw what looked like the lights of another ship heading toward him. He had his signalman contact the other ship by light. The message was: "Change your course 10 degrees to the south."

The reply came back: "Change your course 10 degrees to the north."

Then the captain answered: "I am a captain, so you change your course 10 degrees to the south."

Reply: "I am a seaman first class. Change your course 10 degrees to the north."

This last exchange really infuriated the captain, so he signaled back: "I am a battleship—change your course 10 degrees to the south."

Reply: "And I am a lighthouse. Change your course 10 degrees to the north." (Contributed by Dan Bell.)

While this is a light-hearted illustration, it makes a point. The lighthouse was permanent. It could not be moved. Shirley's principles are like the lighthouse; they are immovable. She uses the lighthouse principles such as responsibility, courage, humility, innovation, respect, empathy, integrity, and perseverance as beacons by which she charts her work and measures her effectiveness on a daily basis. Shirley gets up and fights for causes that are self-imposed. Even with two knee replacements, she continued to make daily contributions by phone, sometimes in great pain while doing her physical therapy. Her commitment and dedication to causes are unrelenting.

This is a woman who gives of her heart, time, talents, and energies to causes too numerous to mention. Many recipients will never know who the charitable giver is or was, and that's what makes her giving so meaningful. She approaches all of her volunteer work as a joy rather than a task. She carries her personal enthusiasm into every group, and that goes a long way in creating the kind of enthusiasm others need to give or go beyond the call of duty.

This woman accepts *responsibility* for causes that will improve the lives of the downtrodden, those less fortunate, and, particularly, children who need motivation and a feeling of being cared for and loved. She teaches values by example—conveying that with every right there is a responsibility. She continues to lift the vision in her students. She tutors and mentors, simultaneously instilling in them determination to take responsibility for their lives and showing them how to define their destinies. (You don't read about this, yet it has more meaning than any board appointment.)

She displays *courage* in many instances, a principle that is hard to find today when people should be standing tall for their beliefs and doing the right thing. Time does not allow for the examples of the principle of courage I would like to give, but I must share a classic: The courageous way she handled

the situation when Henry lost the re-election for Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. She would not allow a discussion regarding the reasons for his loss. Rather, she communicated clearly all of the differences Henry had made while in office, and that what he had done would have an effect on tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow. She also communicated that we had done our best and our best was going to make a positive contribution to this state and nation. Her courage pointed out, to most of us, how important it is for each of us to do everything we can, when we can, for doing this will make the world a better place for everyone.

Humility is a principle of everyday greatness that Shirley learned from her parents. I know because I am a “Down East” person, and down-east parents would “wear you out” reminding you to never be boastful because you have more than someone, and you would never be snobbish to anyone. That’s where speaking twice and three times originated. This has served her well for her ego never needs polishing, and she does not seek applause.

Innovation is something that comes naturally to Shirley, and at times it is totally misunderstood, for Shirley is impatient when she knows what needs to be changed. For all of you to whom I never had the opportunity to explain Shirley’s innovation, you need to know that Shirley does not throw out something just because it does not work; nor will she adopt something because it is new, but because she believes or knows it does work. She is a change agent!

Shirley has earned the *respect* of friends, family, and foe because of her respect for herself. She has probably done more in helping to create a diverse community than anyone I know. She has gone out of her way to create opportunities for people of all races and ethnic and religious groups, to open their minds, to expand their perspectives, to exchange ideas, and to use that exchange to come to new understanding and appreciation.

Empathy is one of the principles that Shirley possesses in abundance to the point that I feel Shirley needs to let go a little. At this age she doesn’t have enough time or ears to set aside time solely for the purpose of listening to everyone—time to listen to children, grandchildren, and for those under her leadership enough. Notice that I didn’t even include Henry. Shirley has, as we say down east, “a whole heap of people waiting for empathetic listening and honest feed back,” and she will continue to provide it.

Shirley demonstrates a strong capacity for everyday *integrity*. This is reflected not only in her relationship to others—and there are many examples—but most of all, in her daily concern for her children and grandchildren, particularly Little Henry and Endya. She does this because it is the right thing to do, and they aren’t even aware. You have to know Shirley to know the depth of her concern for them. Every time I read Marian Wright

Edelman's *The Measure of Our Success—A Letter to My Children and Yours*, I imagine Shirley doing this one day, with bedrock character explaining to each and every one of her children and grandchildren that the development of character is the heart of development and her expectations of each.

The final principle I will mention is *perseverance*. Shirley had to have a hand in its definition—from being valedictorian in high school to all the accomplishments she has achieved. You can be assured if Shirley sets her sights on a target, she will achieve it regardless of how much work it takes. Her objective will be accomplished. Fear of failure never enters her mind.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a picture of the Shirley I know. I believe I have painted the picture of a woman of honor and principle, who never neglects her responsibilities, who has worked tirelessly and long, a woman who continues to stand up for her principles even in the face of opposition. You can't see these in a resumé. In short, Shirley is a woman of "Everyday Greatness" to be cherished, and one who really deserves this award. Let me close with a poem that characterizes Shirley. It is Mari Evans's *I Am a Black Woman* (Quill/Morrow, 1970):

I
 am a black woman
 tall as a cypress
 strong
 beyond all definition still
 defying place
 and time
 and circumstance
 assailed
 impervious
 indestructible
 Look
 on me and be
 renewed

My Heroes

Whitney Frye

As children we are often inclined to model ourselves after seemingly idealistic personalities. Characters that are plastered on our television screens, wedged between the pages of our novels, and sometimes tacked on our walls. Fictional characters that can leap buildings in a single bound or some long-haired beauty whose voice could lure animals out of hiding. Fortunately, I was not like most of my peers. I had more than one superhero; in fact, their “secret lair” was less than a mile from my childhood home. My heroes knew me by name. How many other kids could say that superman himself called them on a daily basis and even gave them birthday gifts? I had it made! Their equivalent to the bat cave had a white fence, not a picket fence but close enough. The lair was always filled with great company that was eerily familiar, and a raucous laughter that seemed to shake the walls.

In fact, their company was not just eerily familiar; it was my family. The superheroes were my grandparents. They were void of those ridiculous capes and unnecessary masks. They needed no disguise. My grandmother



was and is always impeccably outfitted, most often by St. John. I've checked her tag and that is indeed what she is wearing tonight. My grandfather, on the other hand, is usually dressed in a shirt that my grandmother undoubtedly bought for him and what he likes to call comfortable shoes. When he's really feeling excited, he puts on what he calls his Masters Jacket—a jacket cut from a piece of fabric the color of a putting green with big brass buttons. When he dons that jacket he taps into his alter ego, a man that can putt from 30 feet away and can hit the ball off the tee with pinpoint accuracy. Now, I don't know how true that description is, but it is always valid within the recesses of *his* mind.

It is not hard to equate a superhero analogy with my grandparents. In fact, sometimes the feats that they have accomplished seem almost unattainable, as if a superhero must have completed the task. But aside from their many accolades as professionals, they remain superheroes at home. As a child, I thought that it was the most amazing thing that my grandfather could jump off the diving board on one end of the pool and in a single breath come out at the other end. I tried for years to figure out how to do that. Eventually I succeeded, feeling like I had that much of the same power that “papa” did. I even got out of the pool just like papa. All I had to do was blow my cheeks really big and wipe the water from my face very, very vigorously. I got the same feeling watching my grandmother in the kitchen putting a mixture of various powders, eggs, and milk into a bowl and smelling perfection waft out of the oven. Sometimes I would take all of the pots and pans out of the bottom cupboards and arrange them on the floor just so I could partake in someone who was much better than Julia Childs. She was simply amazing.

Like most superheroes they do have some inherent flaws, not unlike most of us. My grandfather has the ability to speak to almost anyone and make him or her feel completely comfortable. From the president of the United States to the grocery store clerk, he can strike up a meaningful conversation. The only problem is that he sometimes may forget the name of whomever he is speaking with. On one particular occasion, I was walking with my grandfather when a man came up to him and began a lengthy conversation. Being the inquisitive child I was, and still am, I asked “Who was that, papa?” He quickly retorted, “I don't know but your grandmother will tell me in a second.” My grandmother on the other hand has a very serious problem with her tear ducts. Her tear ducts seem to leak at the slightest provocation. If you turn and look, she's probably crying now. At any family function my grandmother is liable to burst into tears. She told me that she cried every day before I received my acceptance letter into law school. I asked her why would she do such a thing. She said “I cry when I'm happy.”

Another glance may provide a view of her mixing her tears with a large dose of laughter.

Aside from all the talk of superheroes and mystical creatures, my grandparents are truly *grand* parents. As we age we like to say that it's the simple things in life that mean the most. Most often those simple things are the things that we overlook and deem as trivial. I relish the simple gifts life presents to us. We often forget that time is a very precious gift. I have always enjoyed a line from my favorite movie, *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*: "Time is a precious thing; never waste it." Although the character is fictional, his words ring true. The time I have with my grandparents is very precious and is the one of the things I have enjoyed most. My grandparents have taught me things a classroom has not. For instance, many may believe that it is my grandfather's ascendance in the field of law or my father's prowess that has inspired me to pursue the legal profession. Indeed it was not. When I was around the age of five or six, I got into a small fight with one of my sisters, as siblings usually do. As I was sulking up the stairs, my grandmother grabbed my arm and said to me, "We don't argue, we don't fight, we negotiate, understand?" My grandmother never knew the power that she instilled in that five-year-old. I think she knows now. The same things that amazed me when I was five amaze me even now. My grandfather has an unrivaled memory. He can remember lines from plays that he read over 50 years ago. I believe he can still finish this sentence, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears. . . (I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him)." They are indeed two truly amazing creatures.

I've been approached by individuals who tell me that my grandparents are wonderful people and are some of the greatest people that they've met. Without any hint of arrogance, I want to say, "I know." They are two great beacons of light that provide rays of inspiration and spark hope within the lives of all they meet. Their lives read as an incredible story that rivals any comic book. I can only thank God for blessing me with two great individuals that I am glad to call grandparents and friends. Jordan, Endya, and I love you both, and are extremely proud of the strides you have made for our family and the citizens of this state. Congratulations!

Presentation of the Award

Willis P. Whichard

Thank you Bec, Dr. Speight-Buford, and Whitney. Like you, I have been privileged to know the Fries long and well. I got to know Henry during my first legislative session in 1971, and it was not long until I made Shirley's acquaintance as well. In the 1973-74 session, Henry and I had adjoining offices. We must have been inefficient, for we often found ourselves in the building at night when others were long gone, and a stronger friendship developed during that time. The inefficiency continued during the twelve-plus years we served together on the North Carolina Supreme Court, and from time to time when we were in the Justice Building together alone at night we would take a break for dinner at Ballentine's Cafeteria. I know from long observation and experience that Henry and Shirley are splendid people; that they have been superb servants of the State of North Carolina; and that they have contributed in significant ways to many organizations of the state and its communities. They honor us by allowing us to present them with the 2008 North Caroliniana Society Award.

The master cup, on which the names of recipients are engraved, resides in the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. You are invited to go by to see it on your next visit to the campus. The recipients receive a smaller sterling silver cup like the one that I hold in my hand.

Henry and Shirley, please come forward to accept this cup as a symbol of the North Caroliniana Society Award for 2008. It's now your turn to respond to this audience of your friends and admirers.



The Fries graciously accepted the North Caroliniana Society Award, thanked the Society for it, and expressed appreciation for the presence of family and friends. In the bottom photo, the former chief justice posed with his secretary, Pauline Irving, who served him for about a third of a century.

PART III

Photographic Memories

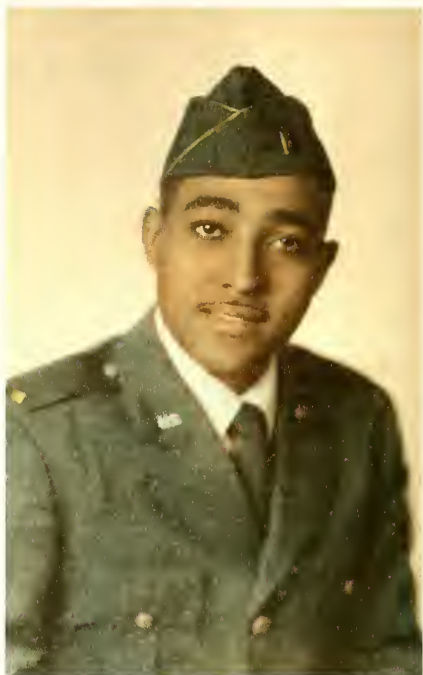
On the next three pages are reproduced vintage photographs of Shirley and Henry Frye and their family.

The first page features (clockwise from top left) Shirley at age 17, Henry as lieutenant, the couple at their wedding in 1956, and the pair on their fiftieth wedding anniversary in 2006.

The entire Frye family in 1995 is pictured on the second page. Front: Whitney, Henry, Endya, and Jordan; back: Shirley, Henry Jr., Harlan, and daughter-in-law Angela.

The third page pictures at top the family a dozen years later; and at bottom, granddaughters Whitney, Jordan, and Endya.

On additional pages is a selection of snapshots made during the addresses, receptions, and dinner honoring Shirley and Henry Frye.

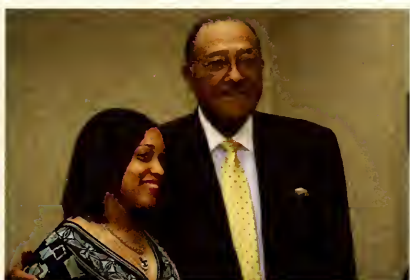
















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- No. 2. *The Paul Green I Know* (1978)
by Elizabeth Lay Green
- No. 3. *The Albert Coates I Know* (1979)
by Gladys Hall Coates
- No. 4. *The Sam Ervin I Know* (1980)
by Jean Conyers Ervin
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1979	<i>Albert Coates</i>	1995	<i>LeRoy T. Walker</i>
1980	<i>Sam J. Ervin, Jr.</i>	1996	<i>Hugh MacRae Morton</i>
1981	<i>Sam Ragan</i>	1997	<i>John L. Sanders</i>
1982	<i>Gertrude Sprague Carraway</i>	1998	<i>Doris Waugh Betts</i>
1983	<i>John Fries Blair</i>	1999	<i>Reynolds Price</i>
1984	<i>William C. & Ida H. Friday</i>	2000	<i>Richard H. Jenrette</i>
1985	<i>William S. Powell</i>	2001	<i>Wilma Dykeman</i>
1986	<i>Mary D.B.T. & James H. Semans</i>	2002	<i>Frank Borden Hanes, Sr.</i>
1987	<i>David Stick</i>	2003	<i>Maxine Svalin</i>
1988	<i>William McWhorter Cochrane</i>	2004	<i>Elizabeth Vann Moore</i>
1989	<i>Emma Neal Morrison</i>	2004	<i>W. Trent Ragland, Jr.</i>
1990	<i>Burke Davis</i>	2005	<i>W. Dallas Herring</i>
1991	<i>Lawrence F. London</i>	2005	<i>John Hope Franklin</i>
1992	<i>Frank Hawkins Kenan</i>	2006	<i>Betty Ray McCain</i>
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1994	<i>Archie K. Davis</i>	2007	<i>Fred Chappell</i>
1994	<i>North Carolina Collection</i>	2008	<i>Henry E. & Shirley T. Frye</i>
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